

“Lines Crossed: Separation of Church and State. Has the Obama Administration  
Trampled on  
Freedom of Religion and Freedom of Conscience?”

Testimony of Laura Champion, M.D.,  
Medical Director and Physician, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan  
Before the  
Committee on Oversight & Government Reform  
U.S. House of Representatives  
February 16, 2012

Good morning Chairman Issa and Ranking Member Cummings:

I appreciate your invitation to share my concerns about the contraceptive mandate. My name is Dr. Laura Champion and I am the medical director and a practicing physician at Calvin College Health Services in Grand Rapids, Michigan. I graduated from the University of Washington School of Medicine in 1996 and have been Board Certified in Family Medicine since 1999. I provided primary care in a private practice in Grand Rapids, MI until June 2011 when I assumed the medical director role at Calvin College. I want to share my concerns with you as a person who medically understands what is at stake and who has the responsibility for negotiating and providing the student insurance coverage to the students at Calvin College, a private, accredited, four-year, Christian liberal arts college. We are an institution whose religious character and mission is central to everything we are and everything we do.

In order to understand our religious objection, you need to understand that we take seriously our faith commitments, our holistic student health services, and our intellectual mission. Since 1876, this Christian liberal arts college in Michigan has built a sterling reputation for academic excellence. Consistently ranked in *U.S. News and World Report* as a top liberal arts college, it is one of only four colleges in the nation to receive a Senator Paul Simon Award for Campus Internationalization. This contraceptive mandate jeopardizes our commitment to international students who would be negatively affected by the college not being able to provide a health insurance option to them. Calvin is fortunate to have a fully staffed Health Services Department to serve the medical needs of our student body. We require that each student have health insurance to attend our school. We offer an affordable option for those students who enroll under-insured. Great care was taken in crafting the student health plan to ensure that it reflects the values and beliefs of Calvin College and the Christian Reformed Church. This student health plan covers all preventative care at 100% according to the medical definition of preventative care; we do not cover Plan B, Ella, or sterilization.

I am concerned about the many specific facets of these regulations and I am concerned as a health provider about the wide sweeping regulatory overreach that the mandate on contraceptives signals. Contraception is not controversial at our school. Clinicians write prescriptions that include contraception for a variety of reasons, including the prevention of pregnancy. However, abortifacient agents are not prescribed, nor are they covered in our health care plan. The advocacy of these agents is profoundly inconsistent with the belief system of our college and our religion. To force the access of such agents upon our students would violate our religious liberty. Calvin College is committed to ethical, moral and spiritual higher education. To teach one set of values and beliefs and then to provide abortifacient

agents for students would lack integrity. We cannot expect to train ethically minded leaders for the future and then require a compromise of values and beliefs by the colleges and universities that supply such leaders.

I want to underscore that our College and our Health Services Department would be severely harmed by the mandate requiring abortion causing drugs. We challenge our students to live out the values they believe. Our intent and purpose is that our entire faculty, staff, and students are living examples of believers trying to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. We make every effort to ensure that our practices follow our beliefs. Forcing Health Services to be part of the distribution of abortifacient agents is an affront to our principles and sends an inaccurate message to our students. Requiring coverage of abortifacient agents is in direct contradiction to the spiritual and behavioral standards that Calvin College expects of ourselves and our students.

Even when Americans hold vastly different views on the sanctity of life, this mandate raises a point that should be examined by all: do we value religious freedom in our country or not? Further, the mandate elevates contraception and abortive drugs to the level of preventative health care. They are not. Plan B and Ella should not be considered equivalent to cancer screening or vaccinations. Pregnancy is not a disease. This is a premise that I reject both religiously and medically.

Recently the White House purported to offer an accommodation—perhaps the most fundamental flaw of which is that religious liberties are not something that any president has the legal authority to recognize or deny. As Christians, we believe these rights come from God, and as US citizens, we believe our

Constitution affirms and guarantees our right to religious liberty. There is a limit to what government can compel us to do or not do particularly in matters of faith and conscience. It is in the best interest of all Americans, of every ideological stripe, that this limit, this line, not be crossed.

This is not about politics, this is not about contraception, and this is not about depriving women of health care. Rather, this is personal. This is about my daily life as a physician, a Christian, and a Medical Services Director. Whether I will be able as a physician to practice medicine within my belief system. Whether Calvin College will be able to continue its historic tradition of living out the faith it teaches. A government that is of the people, by the people, and for the people, should not force the people to violate their consciences.

I oppose this mandate for the reasons and rationale above. I respectfully request your help so that Calvin College does not have to violate its religious beliefs.

Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
Witness Disclosure Requirement – "Truth in Testimony"  
Required by House Rule XI, Clause 2(g)(5)

Name: Laura Champion

1. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) you have received since October 1, 2008. Include the source and amount of each grant or contract.

No

2. Please list any entity you are testifying on behalf of and briefly describe your relationship with these entities.

Calvin College  
Employee - Medical Director

3. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) received since October 1, 2008, by the entity(ies) you listed above. Include the source and amount of each grant or contract.

Not to my knowledge.

I certify that the above information is true and correct.

Signature:

Laura Champion MD

Date:

2.15.2012